

**Blind Task Force Meeting
November 30, 2005
Missouri State Teacher's Association (MSTA)
407 South Sixth Street
Columbia, Missouri**

Members Present: Paul Ajuwon; Grenetha Baldwin; Karen Berley; Steve Berman; Donna Borgmeyer; Cindy Dowis; Melodie Friedebach; Debbi Head; Kent Kolaga; Russ McCampbell; Patti Schonlau; Jim Sucharski; Sheila Wright.

Members Not Present: Lisa Wayland-Boettcher; Joe Sartorius.

Guests Present: Roselie Backer; Anthony Blades; Susan Ford; Mike Merrick.

DESE Staff Present: Mary Corey; Lori Conner; Betty McCartney.

Action Points:

- Data Element 3: The BSS Effectiveness Study Committee will make recommendations on evaluating effectiveness of BSS (especially using data on districts being served by BSS, blind/visually students identified, services provided and MAP results).
- Data Element 5: The Blind Study Committee will prepare more specific questions regarding Braille Instruction and related services for students. The questions will then be forwarded on to DESE prior to January 2006 to add to the 2006 survey.
- Data Element 6: The Blind Study Committee will develop a survey for special education teachers regarding the availability of VI teachers and their usage, as well as the numbers and types of students needing VI services.
- Data Element 7: The Blind Study Committee will prepare more specific questions to add to the 2006 survey regarding writing in Braille.
- Sunshine Law Training at next BTF meeting.
- DESE will work with Assessment to get VI teachers on board for Item Writing.
- BTF will make recommendations to CTB/McGraw Hill regarding contracted Braille on MAP tests.
- Format of the Outreach and BSS data collection spreadsheet will be shared with the BSS Effectiveness Committee.

Call to Order/Introductions: Debbi Head called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m. All present introduced themselves.

Minutes Review: Steve Berman reviewed the minutes from the September 14 meeting and the following corrections were made:

Page 5 – Under "Governor's Council for Disabilities," change "ILC" to "Independent Living Resource Center" is sponsoring a Special Needs Prom April 22, 2006 for all special needs students ages 14 thru 30 who are South and East of Columbia.

Kent Kolaga made a motion to accept the minutes with corrections. Sheila seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Agenda Review: Debbi Head made two additions to the agenda: (1) "VI Certification Update" as "Item f" under "Ad hoc Committee Updates," (2) "MAP Testing" under "MAP Improvement Committee."

Russ McCampbell made a motion to accept the agenda changes; Sheila seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Standing Committee Updates:

Annual Blind Study/Visually Impaired Literacy Study: Mary Corey reviewed each element of the Missouri Annual Blind/Visually Impaired Literacy Study-December 2005 with the Blind Task Force. There was a discussion regarding the following concerns and changes:

- Change "rehabilitative" to "rehabilitation" in the report.
- Data Element 3: To add the asterisk note (*) for Core Data Reporting: *Many ECSE students are reported as YCDD instead of listing them under a specific disability category.
- Data Element 3: The BSS Effectiveness Study Committee will make recommendations on evaluating effectiveness of BSS (especially using data on districts being served by BSS, blind/visually students identified, services provided and MAP results).
- Data Element 5: The Blind Study Committee will prepare more specific questions regarding Braille Instruction and related services for students, and will forward the questions to DESE prior to January 2006, to add to the 2006 survey.
- Data Element 6: The Blind Study Committee will develop a survey for special education teachers regarding the availability of VI teachers and their usage, as well as the numbers and types of students needing VI services.
- Data Element 7: The Blind Study Committee will prepare more specific questions to add to the 2006 survey regarding writing in Braille.
- Data Element 10: For school-year 2004-2005, change to "one (1)" student reached age 21 without obtaining a diploma.
- Data Element 12: Number of Students Referred – Change to "41" to display RSB's data instead of DESE's data from Blind Literacy Survey.
- Include Dr. Heskett's report, *Services for Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Missouri*, as Appendix D to the Missouri Annual Blind/Visually Impaired Literacy Study-December 2005 to go to the Legislature.

Russ McCampbell made a motion to accept the above changes to the Study; Sheila Wright seconded the motion; and it was unanimously approved.

Presentation: Melodie Friedebach presented a letter of commendation of service and plaque to Debbi Head for having served as chairperson of the BTF for 2003-2005. She also presented letters of commendation of service to Cindy Dowis, Sheila Wright, and Grenetha Baldwin. She presented a new appointment letter to Susan Ford for serving on the Blind Task Force.

Governmental Affairs Committee: It was reported that the Missouri State Government Review Commission has recommended moving the First Steps Program from the DESE to the Department of Health and Senior Services and RSB and the Governor's Council on Disabilities to the DESE under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The DESE has requested an increase of \$506,712 for the Blind Literacy Fund. The Missouri Council of the Blind and the National Federation for the Blind will be working to support this additional funding request. This is in addition to the \$95,000 in the core budget.

There was a discussion regarding First Steps. Sheila Wright made a motion to send a letter to the Governor's Office requesting that First Steps remain under the DESE and not be moved under Health and Senior Services; Patti Schonlau seconded the motion; it was passed with one abstention.

Transition Committee: It was reported that the recommendations from the Transition Committee were similar to those in Dr. Heskett's report. The committee recommended that they focus on helping districts develop quality transition plans for students.

Sunshine Law: There was a discussion regarding the BTF members' awareness and compliance with the Sunshine Law. Sunshine Law training will be an agenda item at the next BTF meeting.

Ad hoc Committee Updates:

Budget Committee: Nothing reported. There was a discussion regarding payment for Dr. Heskett's Vision Study and Report. The BTF will continue to be updated on the use of Blind Literacy Funds.

MAP Improvement Committee: The DESE has received responses from CTB/McGraw Hill to the BTF concerns regarding MAP tests.

It was reported that Braille and Large Print (LP) released items for the MAP are available. Reviews of the Braille and LP MAP versions are currently being conducted for Spring 2006 testing. After reviews are completed, review of MAP 2007 pilot items will be conducted.

The DSE is working with the Assessment Section to get VI teachers on board for Item Writing. The DESE's goal is to involve teachers of the visually-impaired in the MAP process through all stages.

The BTF debated when contracted Braille should be used on MAP tests. Currently, the BTF needs to study this further before recommendations are made to CTB/McGraw Hill.

MAP Accommodation Letter: Jim Sucharski presented draft letters to the Certification and Assessment Departments within the DESE. Based on BTF discussions, Jim will draft new letters.

Vision Summit Committee: Responses to the dates and locations of the Vision Summit were reviewed. Steve Berman made a motion to have the Vision Summit on March 29-30, 2006 at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City; Patti Schonlau seconded the motion and it was accepted unanimously.

The Vision Summit Committee will proceed with planning and development of the conference. Committee members are to include: Steve Berman (Chair); Donna Borgmeyer, Susan Ford and Patti Schonlau, with assistance from Mike Merrick of RSB.

Outreach Ad Hoc Committee:

KEYS Program: Jim Sucharski presented goals for MSB in utilizing the recommendations from Dr. Heskett's report through the KEYS (Knowledge to Empower Your Success) Program. MSB is developing goals for serving students on a short-term basis. Students would come to MSB, receive necessary training and return to their home district. The purpose of many of the goals Jim reviewed is to provide short-term intensive services to children served by local districts.

BSS Effectiveness Study Committee: The DESE is currently collecting data on activities performed by BSS and MSB Outreach. The purpose of the data collection is to have a standard format and be able to aggregate and analyze types of activities by districts and RPDC regions. The spreadsheet format will be shared with the BSS Effectiveness Committee.

Working Lunch Discussion:

Financial Update: Betty gave the financial update for first quarter expenditures.

Blind Skills Specialists Update/Reports: Anthony Blades updated the Task Force on training and other activities. Jennifer Coy is on maternity leave. She had a baby boy, Russell Wynn, on November 19, 2005.

Betty McCartney presented a brief update on Aundrayah Shermer's activities and involvement in Project DIVERSE.

National Agenda Update: It was reported that the comments and concerns from the National Agenda Meeting remain the same--new formatting for transmitting information to students through the APH library and getting that process expedited. The core curriculum is what our visually-impaired students need to be receiving (independent living skills, daily living skills, etc.).

Researchers want questions answered regarding how P.L. 94-142 (original IDEA) has affected blind individuals. After 30 years, researchers are asking what difference has IDEA made?; not only for those receiving college degrees, but for those who are employed.

Current Issues:

Task Force Membership: Debbi Head reviewed the applications for the parent, visually-impaired teacher and employer openings. The Task Force is presently in need of student, building administrator, and special education administrator candidates. The DESE will maintain a database of candidates who have applied for the BTF positions.

There was a discussion regarding the student position. Lisa Wayland-Boettcher has had more than three unapproved absences to the BTF meetings. Sheila Wright made a motion to declare a second vacancy for the student position; Grenetha Baldwin seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

Blind Task Force Elections: The floor was open for nominations for Chairperson. Sheila Wright nominated Russ McCampbell; Jim Sucharski seconded the nomination and Russ was elected Chairperson by acclamation. Sheila Wright nominated Patti Schonlau for Vice-Chairperson. Jim Sucharski seconded the nomination; Russ McCampbell moved that nominations cease, and Patti was elected by acclamation.

Russ McCampbell nominated Steve Berman for Secretary (second term); Patti Schonlau moved that nominations cease and Steve was elected by acclamation.

BTF Meeting Locations: There was a discussion among the BTF to continue having their meetings at the MSTA. Russ McCampbell and/or Jim Sucharski will contact MSTA for permission to continue using their facility for the upcoming 2006-07 BTF meetings.

APH Patterns Program: An overview of the APH Patterns Program was presented. A new, updated edition of the APH Patterns Program for the beginning Braille reader is in the process of being reviewed by vision teachers around the country.

Governors Council for Disabilities: Donna presented information on the Poster and Journalism Contests and Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

Current Workshops/Events: Vision Summit - March 29-30, 2006 - Capitol Plaza, Jefferson City; Power Up - April 10-11, 2006 – Holiday Inn Executive Center, Columbia; Statewide Independent Living Council Transportation Conference is coming up; AlphaPointe Workshop - May 5, 2006.

The National Federation for the Blind has scholarship programs on the national and state level. Applications are available to seniors in high school or to former students who are going on to college. The NFB state convention is March 24-26, 2006.

VI Certification Update: Kent Kolaga provided the below-list of recommendations on VI certification to the Task Force:

- **Adjustments to Certification Requirements**
 1. *Simplify VI certification by standardizing core competencies and eliminating necessary competencies: such as Adaptive PE and Visual Aids and Appliances usage – only required for special education majors seeking VI certification which avenue to certification is not available. DESE recognizes out-of-state TVI certification (reciprocity) and has eliminated coursework/competencies only required for TVI certification, but not specific to VI education only (i.e. Adaptive PE).
 2. List required competencies written to appear as competencies rather than course titles.
 3. *If a praxis test is used to prove competencies without course work (e.g. Mild/Moderate), then it should continue to prove achievement of that set of competencies. DESE is allowing MSU to monitor TVI certification where one option available allows Mild/Moderate Praxis certification to stand in for demonstrated competency toward TVI certification.
- **Expand Opportunities for Achieving Required Competencies**
 4. *Expand distance-learning opportunities and find funds to supplement the added expenses. MSU has included distance-learning (on-line courses) for the TVI training program.

5. *Develop incentives such as tuition reimbursement, salary stipends, etc., to encourage candidates to seek VI certification. DESE provides tuition reimbursement and MSU now administers a federally funded grant program for dual certification (TVI and COMS).
6. Coordinate IHE programs and RPDC/Blindness Skills Specialists offerings so as to allow competency acquisition and accrediting.

Note: The asterisk (*) recommendations (#1, #3, #4, #5) are being implemented at this time.

2006-07 Blind Task Force Meetings: (sites to be determined):

February 22, 2006

May 10, 2006

September 20, 2006

December 6, 2006

The Task Force meeting was adjourned at 3:13 p.m.